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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/619,854

07/15/2003

Michael A. Mitchell

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EXAMINER

BOGART, MICHAEL G

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3761

DATE MAILED: 06/21/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/619,854

Applicant(s)

MITCHELL ET AL. ✓

Examiner

Michael G. Bogart

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3761

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 17 April 2006.
2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 32-81 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) 37-78 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
6) ☒ Claim(s) 32-36 and 79-81 is/are rejected.
7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 15 July 2003 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 10 October 2003.
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Election/Restriction

Applicant's election with traverse of claims 32-36 and 79-81 in the reply filed on 17 April 2006 is acknowledged. The traversal is on the ground(s) that inventions I, II and III are so closely related that a search for the elected claims of group I would necessarily encompass a search for groups II and III. This is not found persuasive because groups II and III claim water absorbent particles comprising a microdomain of water absorbent acidic resins in contact or close proximity to a microdomain of a water absorbent basic resin. This feature does not exist in any of the claims of group I.

The requirement is still deemed proper and is therefore made FINAL.

Information Disclosure Statement

Applicants' information disclosure statement (IDS) dated 10 October 2003 lists multiple non-patent literature documents. Applicants statement enclosed with the IDS indicate that the references were submitted with parent application 09/875,593. The file for that application has been reviewed, and no copies of the non-patent literature are presently available in the file or any databases available to the Examiner.

Specification

This application does not contain an abstract of the disclosure as required by 37 CFR 1.72(b). An abstract on a separate sheet is required.

The status of the related applications in the first paragraph of the specification should be updated.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. § 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. § 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Claims 32-36 and 79-81 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Palumbo (WO 96/15180 A1) in view of Ishizaki *et al.* (WO 97/16492 A1; hereinafter “Ishizaki”; for the purposes of illustration, specific reference below is made to the English language equivalent US 6,001,911 A).

Palumbo teaches an article comprising a water-absorbent sheet material comprising a lightly crosslinked unneutralized acidic water-absorbent resin and a lightly crosslinked

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unneutralized basic water-absorbent resin (abstract, page 1, lines 8-32; page 1, line 34-page 2, line 13; page 3, lines 4-10; page 4, line 37-page 5, line 17).

Palumbo does not expressly teach that the above resins are deposited upon a substrate so as to form a layer of superabsorbent.

Ishizaki teaches a sheet like absorbent material made by depositing superabsorbent resin upon a substrate (abstract; col. 1, lines 18-44 (incorporating by reference Spaulding (US 4,066,583); col. 3, lines 4-32; col. 24, line 25-col. 25, line 65).

At the time of the invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to employ the process of Ishizaki to manufacture an absorbent article including the resins of Palumbo in order to provide an effective absorbent article. See Ishizaki col. 1, lines 6-15; Palumbo, page 1, lines 17-32.

Regarding claims 32 and 79, the claimed limitations about how the article is made, product-by-process claims are not limited to the manipulations of the recited steps, only the structure implied by the steps. MPEP § 2113.

Regarding claim 33, Palumbo teaches a diaper (page 1, lines 17-32).

Regarding claims 34-36, Palumbo teaches an apparatus that absorbs electrolytes including menses or urine (page 2, line 37-page 3, line 2; page 4, lines 3-35).

Regarding claim 79, Ishikawa, incorporating by reference Spaulding (col. 2, lines 23-35), teaches the step of applying heat to the resins.

Regarding claims 80 and 81, Palumbo and Ishikawa do not teach the degree of neutralization of the resins.

Generally, differences in concentration or temperature will not support the patentability of subject matter encompassed by the prior art unless there is evidence indicating such concentration or temperature is critical. “[W]here the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, it is not inventive to discover the optimum or workable ranges by routine experimentation.” *In re Aller*, 220 F.2d 454, 456, 105 USPQ 233, 235 (CCPA 1955) (Claimed process which was performed at a temperature between 40°C and 80°C and an acid concentration between 25% and 70% was held to be prima facie obvious over a reference process which differed from the claims only in that the reference process was performed at a temperature of 100°C and an acid concentration of 10%.); see also *Peterson*, 315 F.3d at 1330, 65 USPQ2d at 1382 (“The normal desire of scientists or artisans to improve upon what is already generally known provides the motivation to determine where in a disclosed set of percentage ranges is the optimum combination of percentages.” MPEP § 2144.05).

A particular parameter must first be recognized as a result-effective variable, i.e., a variable which achieves a recognized result, before the determination of the optimum or workable ranges of said variable might be characterized as routine experimentation. *In re Antonie*, 559 F.2d 618, 195 USPQ 6 (CCPA 1977). In the case of the applied references, minimizing the neutralization of the resins avoids hampering their ultimate absorbent properties.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Michael Bogart whose telephone number is (571) 272-4933.

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In the event the examiner is not available, the Examiner's supervisor, Tatyana Zalukaeva may be reached at phone number (571) 272-1115. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (571) 273-8300 for formal communications. For informal communications, the direct fax to the Examiner is (571) 273-4933.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (571) 272-3700.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).



Michael Bogart
14 June 2006

TATYANA ZALUKAEVA
SUPERVISORY PRIMARY EXAMINER

